IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Original)   A method of allowing a customer to purchase a product having a purchase price from a merchant through an electronic transaction, the method comprising the steps of:

   a)   establishing a deposit account on behalf of the customer with an escrow account provider;

   b)   transferring funds into the deposit account;

   c)   placing an order with the merchant;

   d)   verifying that the deposit account has a balance which is at least equal to the purchase price;

   e)   notifying the merchant that the balance in the deposit account is at least equal to the purchase price;

   f)   delivering the product to the customer; and

   g)   transferring the purchase price of the product from the deposit account to the merchant upon confirmation of delivery of the product to the customer.

2.   (Original) The method of Claims 1 wherein:

   step (d) further comprises transferring the purchase price from the deposit account to a set aside account subsequent to verification of a sufficient balance; and

   step (g) comprises transferring the purchase price of the product from the set aside account to the merchant upon confirmation of delivery of the product to the customer.

3.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein step (d) comprises the escrow account provider approving the purchase of the product subsequent to verifying a sufficient balance in the deposit account.

4.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein step (d) comprises the escrow account provider verifying sufficient funds for the purchase of the product with a financial institution if the customer does not have a deposit account.

5.   (Original)   The method of Claim 4 wherein step (d) further comprises establishing a deposit account and transferring the purchase price of the product from the

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financial institution to the deposit account upon verification of sufficient funds by the escrow account provider.

6.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein step (g) comprises the escrow account provider receiving a signature from the customer to provide verification of delivery.

7.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein step (g) comprises transferring the purchase price to a settlement account prior to transfer of the purchase price to the merchant.

8.   (Original)   The method of Claim 7 wherein the funds in the settlement account are transferred to the merchant on a daily basis.

9.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein a fee is withdrawn by the escrow account provider from the purchase price prior to transferring the purchase price to the merchant.

10.   (Original)   The method of Claim 1 wherein step (b) comprises transferring funds from a financial institution into the deposit account.

11.   (Original)   A method of allowing a customer to purchase online content having a purchase price from a merchant through an electronic transaction, the method comprising the steps of:

    a)   establishing a deposit account on behalf of the customer with an escrow account provider;

    b)   transferring funds into the deposit account;

    c)   placing an order for the online content with the merchant;

    d)   verifying that the deposit account has a balance which is at least equal to the purchase price;

    e)   notifying the merchant that the balance in the deposit account is at least equal to the purchase price;

    f)   downloading the online content to the customer; and

    g)   transferring the purchase price of the online content from the deposit account to the merchant upon confirmation of a successful download.

12.   (Original)   The method of Claim 11 wherein:

    step (d) further comprises transferring the purchase price from the deposit account to a set aside account subsequent to verification of a sufficient balance; and

step (g) further comprises transferring the purchase price from the set aside account to the merchant upon confirmation of a successful download.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein step (d) comprises the escrow account provider approving the purchase of the online content subsequent to verifying a sufficient balance in the deposit account.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein step (d) comprises the escrow account provider verifying sufficient funds for the purchase of the online content with a financial institution if the customer does not have a deposit account.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 14 wherein step (d) further comprises establishing a deposit account and transferring the purchase price of the product from the financial institution to the deposit account upon verification of sufficient funds by the escrow account provider.

16. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein step (f) comprises the merchant agreeing to notify the escrow account provider of a successful download after downloading the online content and the escrow account provider notifies the customer of the successful download.

17. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein step (g) comprises transferring the purchase price to a settlement account prior to transfer of the purchase price to the merchant.

18. (Original) The method of Claim 17 wherein the funds in the settlement account are transferred to the merchant on a daily basis.

19. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein a fee is withdrawn by the escrow account provider from the purchase price prior to transferring the purchase price to the merchant.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of allowing a customer to place a wager on gaming action with a merchant through an electronic transaction, the method comprising the steps:

a) establishing a deposit account for the customer with an escrow account provider;

b) placing the wager for the gaming action with the merchant;

c) transferring funds for the wager from the deposit account to a set aside account;

d) notifying the merchant that the funds for the wager have been transferred to the set aside account;

e) verifying the merchant can cover the wager;

f) transferring the funds for the wager from the set aside account to an action account during pendency of the gaming action; and

g) transferring funds for the wager from action account to one of the merchant and the customer.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 20 wherein the completion of the gaming action will result in one of win and a loss, and step (g) comprises transferring funds to the customer for a win and transferring funds to the merchant for a loss.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 20 wherein step (e) further comprises suspending play if the merchant does not have sufficient funds to cover the wager.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 22 wherein in step (e) further comprises resuming play when the merchant has funds to cover the wager.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 20 wherein the merchant has a gaming post up account and step (e) comprises verifying the merchant can cover the wager with the funds in the gaming post up account.